

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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CTG Launches Project to Help Open Government, Enhance Shared Service

The Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany is partnering with Digital Towpath (DTP), a nationally recognized digital government shared service comprised of small and medium local governments throughout New York State. CTG will help DTP improve its electronic records management so that local governments can operate more efficiently, easily comply with records management laws, increase public records access for citizens, and be more open.

A pressing challenge for small local governments is the issue of records management, particularly the management of records created in digital form, known as “born digital records.” The most efficient way for local governments to maintain these records is digitally throughout the record’s life cycle, however, this presents a challenge to local governments with limited technical capability. Currently, many of these governments rely on paper output and manual processes that consume staff time, slow down operations, increase costs, and ultimately affect citizens’ ability to access government services and information.

This project, spearheaded by CTG and funded by the NYS Archives’ Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF), will help DTP provide its local government members with the functionality to manage “born digital” records throughout the record’s lifecycle in a cost and time effective manner, providing increased public access to critical data. By helping local government take a comprehensive look at their government information by addressing the policies, management practices, as well as technology issues, this project will contribute to more transparent and open government. There is a growing need at all levels of government to allow access to and use of government data in support of good governance. Consequently, governments such as the member governments in DTP, are seeking new and innovative ways to achieve this goal. Additionally, increased records management capability will allow individual governments to better safeguard information and more easily comply with increasingly demanding records management laws.

DTP sought CTG’s expertise on this project because of CTG’s more than 20 years of experience in helping government agencies provide better public value and solve pressing societal problems through the appropriate use of technology innovation. The records that this project addresses are valuable public resources that are critical to the running of government and the provision of core services to communities.

"Digital Towpath is pleased to work with the Center for Technology in Government to enhance the records management system used by local governments throughout New York State. Improving our technology systems is paramount to DTP's mission of providing small and medium local governments with the necessary technologies to help open government and better serve citizens," said Mitchell Levinn, Mayor of the Village of East Nassau and Board Chair of the Digital Towpath Cooperative.

Overseen by CTG’s Director of Technology Innovation and Services, Derek Werthmuller, and Web Application Developer, Jim Costello, four UAlbany College of Engineering and Applied Sciences students will analyze the existing electronic records management system (ERMS) to include a comprehensive mapping of the current code. This work, which the students will do as part of CTG’s student lab, will help minimize the costs of developing the new software needed to enhance the ERMS. Experiential learning opportunities such as working with CTG and DTP on this project are designed to have lasting effects on a student’s future career by providing them with real-world, practical experience to supplement their classroom education.

DTP was established in 1998 by officials from small and rural local governments to collectively support each other in the use of technology because, unlike larger governments, small municipalities often do not have the resources to support high-level use of technology. Shared service models, such as Digital Towpath, have proven to lessen cost burdens and allow organizations to be more self-sufficient. Originally designed simply to provide tools for the establishment and maintenance of low-cost government websites, DTP has grown into a multi-faceted information technology system, providing highly functional, low-cost web based tools and services for websites, email, electronic records, storage, and more for its nearly 200 municipal members, serving nearly one million citizens

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across the state. Some members include Herkimer County, the Villages of Lake George, Lake Placid, East Nassau, Canajoharie, Fonda, the Towns of Cazenovia, Galway, Hartwick, and many more. The shared-service model used by DTP allows rural and small local governments to meet technology needs while keeping costs low.

For more information on other projects by the Center for Technology in Government, view more of their website (www.ctg.albany.edu) or call 518-442-3983. For more information about Digital Towpath, visit www.digitaltowpath.org or call 315-520-4502.

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